

Agency 468

Environmental Hearings Office**Recommendation Summary**

Dollars in Thousands

	Annual FTEs	General Fund State	Other Funds	Total Funds
2003-05 Expenditure Authority	9.0	1,942		1,942
Total Maintenance Level	9.0	2,000		2,000
Difference		58		58
Percent Change from Current Biennium	0.0%	3.0%		3.0%
Performance Changes				
Performance Pay		11		11
Nonrepresented Employees Cost of Living Adjustment		46		46
Nonrepresented Employees Health Benefit Change		10		10
Pension Method Change		(30)		(30)
General Inflation		(5)		(5)
Reduce Appeal Resolution Timelines		54		54
Salary Increases		80		80
Subtotal		166		166
Total Proposed Budget	9.0	2,166		2,166
Difference		224		224
Percent Change from Current Biennium	0.0%	11.5%		11.5%
Total Proposed Budget by Activity				
Environmental Adjudication	9.0	2,166		2,166
Total Proposed Budget	9.0	2,166		2,166

PERFORMANCE LEVEL CHANGE DESCRIPTIONS**Reduce Appeal Resolution Timelines**

The number of complex appeals filed with the Environmental Hearings Office is increasing, even though the actual number of appeals filed has remained relatively stable over the last four years. These complex appeals, such as the Lake Tapps water right appeal, the Port of Seattle SeaTac expansion appeal, and possible I-297 appeals, require additional preparation time and additional days spent in hearings to resolve the case. One administrative appeals judge is increased from 80 percent to 100 percent time to reduce the average time spent resolving appeals from 6.5 months down to the long-term goal of 6.0 months. Resolving these appeals in a timely manner directly impacts economic development by reducing the uncertainty related to the final outcome of permits.

Salary Increases

The Environmental Hearings Office board members, administrative appeals judges, and staff salaries are lower than similar adjudicatory agencies and other state legal staff. In order to increase staff retention and facilitate hiring, exempt board members, judges, and staff salaries are increased by an average of 5.6 percent. This increase will bring these positions into line with similar positions in state government.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND RECREATION

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTIONS

Environmental Adjudication

The Environmental Hearings Office is composed of five independent adjudicative boards -- the Pollution Control Hearings Board, the Forest Practices Appeals Board, the Shorelines Hearings Board, the Hydraulic Appeals Board, and the Environmental and Land Use Hearings Board -- that hear appeals of certain local, regional, and state agency environmental decisions. The boards were created to provide independent review of these agency decisions in an expedited and cost-effective manner.